(v) to change the practice of associating non-official members belonging to SC/ST, Minority and OBC communities, in the Interview Committees and to revert back to the earlier practice of associating serving Railway Officers belonging to these communities, with the provision that in case of non-availability of serving Railway Officers of the respective communities, State/Central Govt./P.S.U./ Bank Officers belonging to these communities and in case of further difficulty, retired Railway Officers of proven integrity belonging to these communities will be associated;

(vi) to introduce the system of duplicate carbonless Answer sheets, the duplicate Answer sheets being sent to the RRCB for independent evaluation, as considered necessary; and

(vii) to set up a grievances redressal machinery to deal systematically with various complaints and representations regarding the functioning of the RRBs' and selections conducted by them.

Violation of recommendation on placement of orders for wagons

416. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:
SHRI GAYA SINGH:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the recommendation of the Rajya Sabha Committee on placement of orders for wagons is being violated by the Railways; and

(b) if so, the relevant recommendation and details of the action taken by Government to implement it?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) and (b) Action Taken Note by the Ministry of Railways on the recommendations of the Rajya Sabha Committee has already been submitted to Rajya Sabha Secretariat in August 1996. It was mentioned in Action Taken Note that from 97-98, Railways would procure 75% through wagon India Limited and 25% through tender. It was also mentioned that effectiveness of this policy would be closely watched, so as to take suitable corrective action, if necessary, in the overall interest. Since procurement through tender resulted in substantial savings to Railways, a review of the above policy was carried out and it was decided after such a review to change the earlier policies from 98-99 and to procure full requirement of wagons through open competitive endering.

This change in policy was conveyed to Chairman Rajya Sabha vide this Ministry's letter dated 22.7.97 and also on the floor of the House on 14.8.97 during discussions on this Ministry's supplementary demands for grants.

Expansion and development projects for Railways

417. DR. B.B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleaded to state:

(a) whether many projects for the expansion and development of Railways are under construction;

(b) the details thereof, project-wise;

(c) the estimated cost thereof;

(d) the total amount spent thereon upto 31st March, 1998 and details of various sources for mobilising funds for these projects; and

(e) by when the above projects are likely to be completed ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (e) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Jhuggi Clusters near Railway Lines

418. SHRI BANGARU LAXMAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the vacant land lying near the railway lines is being converted into jhuggi clusters thus polluting the atmosphere around it;

(b) the reasons for Government not planning to give those lands to private agencies to convert that land into parks, etc; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the Government plan in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Yes, Sir; vacant land near the Railway track has been encroached upon at certain places.

(b) and (c) Do not arise, as the land is required for future developmental works/ expansion of the Railways.

Proposal to check wasteful expenditure in Railways

419. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleaded to state:

(a) whether Government proposes to check the wasteful expenditure in Railways;

(b) if so, what type of expenditure are proposed to be checked; and

(c) the steps taken in that direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) to (c) A major part of the revenues of the Railways are spent on staff, fuel, materials, etc. for maintenance of infrastructure and operating expenses. It is a continuous endeavour of the Railways to ensure that expenditure on these areas is incurred judiciously and is kept strictly need-based. Railways, *inter-alia,* have been taking the following steps to ensure control of expenditure:—

(i) Austerity in areas of hospitality, publicity, advertisements, etc.

(ii) Better manpower management for improving *per capita* productivity.

(iii) Energy conservation.

(iv) Efficient utilisation of assets.

(v) Reduction in equipment failure and accidents.

(vi) Stringent financial and budgetary control through the mechanism of fixation of spending limits and monthly budget proportions.

(vii) Cost control, cost reduction and cost effectiveness in all on-line and off-line activities.

(viii) Zero base review of activities.

(ix) Curbing of ticketless travels, etc.

La-Nina Effect on Indian atmosphere, weather and climate

420. DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the La-Nina effect on the Indian atmosphere and weather and climate, and if so, what are the details thereof;

(b) how is the La-Nina effect going to influence the Indian agriculture;

(c) is this in any way related to the El-NINO effect which is presently affecting us; and

(d) what steps are being taken to prepare the country for this effect?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) The terms "La-Nina" is used to describe abnormal cooling of waters off the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean. This event occurs without any definite periodicity. Statistically it is associated with normal or favourable weather conditions over India.

(b) In the years of "La-Nina", the Indian Southwest Monsoon Rainfall is expected to be normal and this is beneficial for Indian Agriculture.

(c) El-Nino & La-Nina are both related to the sea surface temperatures of the equatorial eastern Pacific Ocean. When the sea surface temperatures are abnormally higher the situation is described as El--Nino and when they are abnormally lower the situation is called La-Nina. There is no one to one correspondence between El-Nino and Indian Summer Monsoon Rainfall.

(d) During the present Southwest monsoon season (June to September) 1998, EL-Nino conditions are likely to prevail upto July. In the event of La-Nina conditions developing after that, the influence on the monsoon rainfall if any, will be on the positive side. Since La-Nina .. not an adverse factor preparatory steps are not called for.